

March 17, 2005

Kennedy Library  
Columbia Point  
Boston, MA

John F. Kennedy National Historic Site and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum present

# Compelling Characters: *Enlivening History through Biography*

A Conference for Teachers of Grades 3 to 8 and School Librarians



**James Cross Giblin** is the author of many highly regarded nonfiction books for young people, including *The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin*; *Edith Wilson: The Woman Who Ran the United States*; *Charles A. Lindbergh: A Human Hero*; and *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*. Recipient of the 1996 Washington Post-Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award for his body of work, Mr. Giblin also served for many years as editor-in-chief of Clarion Books where he is presently a contributing editor.



**Kathryn Lasky** has written more than 80 books for children and adults. Among her picture-book biographies are *Born in the Breezes: The Seafaring Life of Joshua Slocum*; *A Voice of Her Own: The Story of Phillis Wheatley, Slave Poet*; *A Brilliant Streak: The Making of Mark Twain*; and *Vision of Beauty: The Story of Sarah Breedlove Walker*. Winner of the 1986 Washington Post-Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award, Ms. Lasky has also contributed several titles to "The Royal Diaries" and "Dear America" series.



**Diane Stanley** has written and illustrated an acclaimed series of picture-book biographies. Among the titles are *Cleopatra*; *Joan of Arc*; *Saladin: Noble Prince of Islam*; *Michelangelo*; *Leonardo Da Vinci*; *Peter the Great*; and *Shaka: King of the Zulus*. Some of her other books of particular interest to Massachusetts teachers are *Thanksgiving on Plymouth Plantation*; *Joining the Boston Tea Party*; and *The True Adventure of Daniel Hall*. Ms. Stanley is winner of the 2000 Washington Post-Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award.



**Myra Zarnowski** teaches children's literature, social studies and reading at Queens College, City University of New York. A former elementary and middle school teacher, Dr. Zarnowski is dedicated to making history a more interesting and enjoyable subject for children. Her books, *Learning About Biographies*, and *History Makers: A Questioning Approach to Reading and Writing Biographies* emphasize three essential elements in teaching about the past: historical thinking, historical non-fiction, and hands-on activities.

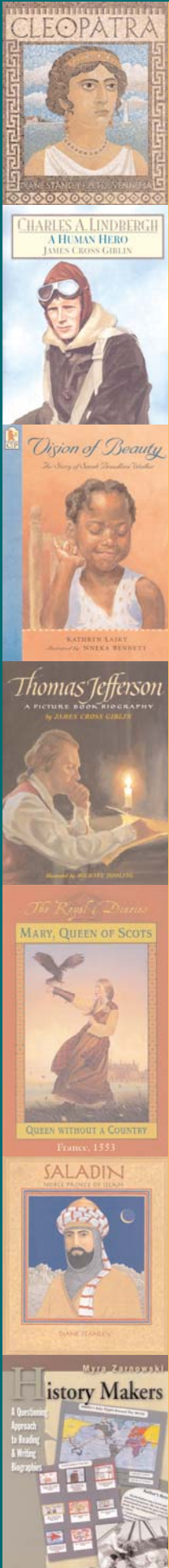
What happens when children "connect" with people from the past through engaging biographies? Imagine your students becoming biographers themselves: learning to read and think critically, ask questions, and develop their own interpretations as they write about compelling characters from the past. Spend a day with three renowned children's book authors and an innovative educator, and come away with great ideas and resources for using biography in your classroom!

This conference addresses learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, including:

- English Language Arts Strands: Composition 24, Language 2, Literature 9
- History Standards: 3.7 (New England & Massachusetts), Concepts & Skills 4 & 10

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# Compelling Characters:

## Enlivening History through Biography

March 17, 2005

Kennedy Library, Columbia Point

8:00 Registration

8:30 Welcome

### 8:45 Introducing Children to the Makers & Shakers of History

What questions do biographers ask when researching their historical characters? How do they go about interpreting a life for children? This panel discussion will feature award-winning authors James Cross Giblin, Kathryn Lasky and Diane Stanley. They will discuss their craft and the challenge of making stories about real people and events as imaginative and thought-provoking for young readers as the best fiction. Norman Finkelstein, librarian and author of history books for children, will moderate.

### 10:30 A Questioning Approach to Biography

Myra Zarnowski will discuss her work with children in New York City public schools who took on the role of biographer, as well as the activities she devised to help them experience the challenges and excitement of actually "doing" history. Sharing examples of students' work, and drawing on books by Diane Stanley, James Giblin, Kathryn Lasky and other authors, Dr. Zarnowski describes an approach to reading and writing biographies that puts simple, far-reaching questions at the heart of the process.

12:00 Lunch

### 12:45 Putting a Human Face on the Past

Participants will meet in smaller groups for a discussion with one of our guest authors. There will be a facilitator for each group, time to ask questions, and the opportunity for a thoughtful exchange with colleagues. *List your first, second, and third choices on the registration form.*

- A James Giblin: Creating Honest and Balanced Portraits** ♦ For young people to form a truthful picture of the past, they need stories not only of the most inspiring figures, but also of the infamous and of flawed heroes. Mr. Giblin has taken on this task in his books on Hitler and Lindbergh, and in his latest, *Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth*. Explore with him how to address the complexities of human nature and the darker side of history, particularly with older children.
- B Kathryn Lasky: Imagining Past Lives, Real and Fictional** ♦ A child's interest in history can be sparked by an unforgettable fictional character like Johnny Tremain or by meeting a real historical figure in an engaging piece of imaginative writing. Kathryn Lasky will describe how she brings to life the heroes of her biographies and works of historical fiction. Talk with her about the kind of research needed for both genres and the pitfalls of projecting present-day ideas and attitudes onto people who lived in another time.
- C Diane Stanley: Opening Windows on World History** ♦ Piquing children's interest in world history is not easy, and teachers can find no better ally in this venture than Diane Stanley. Learn how she reconstructs the worlds in which her subjects lived, and discuss ways of using her vividly illustrated biographies to help students enter into those worlds.

2:00 Closing Session

2:30 Book-signing

## Registration Form

Registrations are honored in the order in which they are received. Conference space is limited - please register early.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please list your first, second, and third choices for  
Putting a Human Face on the Past (A, B, or C).

1st choice \_\_\_\_ 2nd choice \_\_\_\_ 3rd choice \_\_\_\_

Registration fee is \$75 and includes a copy of Dr. Zarnowski's *History Makers*, morning coffee, and lunch.

Registration form and payment must be received by **February 18, 2005**. Confirmation and driving directions will be sent to the first 90 registrants.

Make check payable to **Eastern National**, and mail with completed registration form to:

Liza Stearns  
Kennedy National Historic Site  
c/o 99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

For information, contact Sam Rubin at 617.514.1650 or Liza Stearns at 617.566.1689 x204.

**Reproduce registration form as needed.**